

57/ position of the set in Mossi society. In the years immediately following initiation the members are much involved in group activities, e.g., the arrangement of social dances, courtship, and co-operation in work groups composed of male and female age-sets, and during this period joking is important. As the members attain adult status the groups tend to lose their structural integrity; their minor corporate functions dwindle and ultimately disappear as the responsibility of the young people to their kin groups increases. With this shift in emphasis, joking behavior also diminishes.

66/ While it lasts, however, this type of joking likewise has a structural context characterized by the attributes already identified. Age-sets are structurally separate within the age-grade. Their relations are reciprocal: individual members co-operate in the arrangement of one another's sexual liaisons; they pool their labor and share the profits they earn as members of their co-operative work organizations; and young men often leave Yatenga as migrant laborers in groups organized on the basis of age-grade membership, thereby reinforcing many of the reciprocal ties established in the work groups. The ambivalence characteristic of the relationship is perhaps best explained as the rivalry of peers. Since there is no status hierarchy within a Mossi age-grade, the age-sets are structurally equivalent and independent.

57/ 628 Intervillage Joking

When intervillage joking is institutionalized it may involve all the members of each community. However, I believe it is particularly expected of their respective chiefs. In either case, the participants are separated by their differing political affiliations. The inhabitants of each village are expected to reciprocate in one another's defense, to be mutually hospitable, and to co-operate in the regulation of land tenure at their frontiers. Ambivalence derives from a history of past hostility, dating perhaps from an earlier period when competition for new land was keener and the expanding kingdom did not yet encompass all the villages now within its borders. Such villages are always structurally equivalent in status within the political system, and each is independent of the other.

57/ 618 Joking Between Ethnic Groups

114/ The joking relationship which the Mossi maintain with the Gurunsi and the Samogho peoples, among others, appears to involve the same structural characteristics. However, I learned of this relationship only shortly before I left Yatenga, and a more certain statement concerning it must therefore await further research. It is certain that such joking occurs; I am unsure only of the number of other ethnic groups involved³ and of the relevant details of their historical relations to the Mossi of Yatenga. The groups involved are again separate. There is an expectation that members of each group should extend hospitality and assistance to members of the other. As with villages whose inhabitants joke, the participants in this relationship are ambivalent in their attitudes; the present expectation of co-operation is coupled with a past